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James Holt

Executive Director:

Marcia L. Nash

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Total children in county under age 6:
11,281

**Children under age 6 living in
poverty:** 6.4%

Aiken County Highlights

- The collaboration between *Aiken County First Steps Parents as Teachers Program* and the *Aiken County Family Literacy Program* has resulted in 25% of the parents receiving their General Equivalency Diploma during the 2007-2008 school year.
- The *First Steps for Fathers* Fatherhood Program has provided a service for me that has healed my emotional wounds of not growing up with a father. I am now able to say and believe that "I AM NOT MY FATHER"! D. Morris

Aiken County

First Steps Partnership

Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to work with leaders in Aiken County who have made a commitment to transform their intentions into action. The Aiken County First Steps to School Readiness Partnership Board provided a continuum of quality, integrated services that focused around getting children healthy, ready and eager to learn.

We have learned that through collaboration, we are better able to make the best use of our resources and accomplish our goals as well as identify and fill gaps throughout Aiken County. The Aiken County School District, Aiken/Barnwell Regional Head Start, Margaret J. Weston Medical Center, Clemson Extension, and DHEC all assumed collective responsibility for providing direct, intensive services to children and families in the areas of family strengthening, healthcare, childcare, and early education.

The success of any program depends on meeting the needs of its participants. As a result of the collaborations, high quality early childhood services provided during the 2007-2008 year resulted in an increase in parental involvement, more involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, and a new love for reading. 25% of parents enrolled in the Parents as Teachers and Family Literacy program received their GED; 100% of fathers enrolled in the First Steps for Fathers Fatherhood program increased their understanding of the importance of being a 24/7 Dad; 100% of parents enrolled in the healthcare program increased their knowledge of the importance of prenatal care; and 100% of these infants were born weighing over 5.5 pounds. Quality is not an act, it's a habit!

From 0-3 and beyond, the shared leadership of the Aiken County First Steps Partnership Board, staff and community partners will continue to produce positive results that will ensure Aiken County's children reach school ready to learn.

Keep children first!
Marcia L. Nash
Executive Director
Aiken First Steps

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality childcare to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

Program description: Parents As Teachers (PAT) (also known as Born to Learn©) is an early childhood parent education and support program designed to empower all parents to give their children the best possible start in life. The home-school-community partnership provides parents with information on child development from birth to age 5 and suggests learning opportunities that encourage language and intellectual growth as well as physical and social skills. PAT offers home visits by a certified parent educator; group meetings where parents get together to share their experiences; periodic screenings of overall development, language, hearing, and vision; and a resource network of services in Aiken County.

Program results:

- 20 Families served
- 100% of the total clients served during FY08 were identified as possessing one or more priority risk factors as required by the South Carolina First Steps Board of Trustees.
- Certified 0-3 and 3-K PAT Parent Educator
- Averaged 2 group meetings and 4 parent and child together meetings per month

Fatherhood (FSFF)

Program description: The Aiken County **First Steps for Fathers (FSFF)** Fatherhood Program is a promising program that helps reduce child abuse and neglect by integrating the resources already available in the community. Fathers are a primary source of socialization; they influence family processes and their positive involvement can be beneficial for child well-being. Paternal participation in fatherhood programs has the ability to impact the well-being and functioning of fathers as individuals as well as their families. As we continue to strive to succeed at giving fatherhood an equal chance, *FSFF* will continue to increase the involvement of fathers in their children's lives by helping them to appreciate that they are important to their child's healthy development and that unemployed, unwed, and separated fathers can still interact with their children, contributing significantly to their well-being.

Program results:

- 24 fathers served.
- 62%: custodial fathers; 38%: non-custodial fathers.
- 83% received parent education monthly; 4 group meetings per month.
- 66% were referred employment, legal, alcohol/drug, and early education services.

The First Steps for Fathers Fatherhood Program has provided a service for me that has healed my emotional wounds of not growing up with a father. I am now able to say and believe that "FATHERS MATTER" and "I AM NOT MY FATHER"! Daniel Morris

HEALTHY START.

Non Home-Based Services (Healthcare)

Program description: Aiken County First Steps recognizes that there is a need to provide prenatal services to women who do not have access to medical services or prenatal education. Providing services for prenatal women will promote healthy behaviors of mothers and assure a healthy start for the unborn baby. The goal of this strategy is to target women in their first trimester of pregnancy to receive early prenatal care and education. The strategy involves recruiting and enrolling prenatal women who are not eligible for Medicaid, do not have private insurance for comprehensive services, do not have access in affordable quality health care and who fall below 250% of poverty. The prenatal services include lab testing, prescriptions, one ultrasound, approved special procedures, prenatal education, postpartum and translation services for non-English speaking families

Program results:

- 51 adults; 12 children
- 82% of the families were non-English speaking
- 100% received early, ongoing prenatal services.
- 100% of infants born weighed over 5.5 pounds.
- 100% of children enrolled in the First Smiles oral and dental health program identified a dental home.

QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Childcare Quality Enhancement

Program description: Much of the long-term economic payoff from public investments in high-quality preschool programs will come through decreased crime and delinquency. Quality childcare serves to provide parents with access to the support they seek to promote the optimal development of their preschool aged children. Aiken County First Steps is committed to the overall school success of both young children and their families to make certain that the above risk factors are not a reality. Childcare centers that were a part of this strategy enhanced their services by allowing an appropriate pre-and post environment rating scale assessment and technical assistance training in areas of deficiency as noted by the environment rating scale and participate in childcare trainings that are designed site-specific to the needs of their childcare establishment.

Program results:

- 10 Childcare Facilities served.
- 251 technical assistance hours provided.
- 100% the participating facilities received the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) pre and post assessment.

Childcare Training

Program description: Aiken County First Steps provided continuous training pertaining to needs indicated in each center's action plan as well as any deficiencies prescribed by the appropriate environment rating scale. Trainings provided were delivered by Certified

Trainers credentialed by the Center for Child Career Development. Trainings were coordinated with other local entities, including Childcare Resource and Referral, Aiken Technical College, United Way/Success by Six, Aiken County School District and local faith-based organizations. Sustained and intensive efforts supported providers in the advancement of their status on the Center for Childcare Career Development career lattice.

Program results:

- 6 workshop training sessions provided.
- 118 workshop staff trained.
- 10.5 workshop training hours earned by staff.

Childcare Scholarships

Program description: Aiken County First Steps recognizes quality child care as a research-based determinant of school readiness. As such, we collaborated with parents, the child-care community and its agencies and community partners to maximize child care quality throughout the county. Particular emphasis was placed on assisting parents in their efforts to identify those settings most likely to maximize developmental outcomes, and assisted providers in their own efforts to maximize the learning environments they provide for young children.

Program results:

- 17 children served.
- 100% of the families served were identified as having at least one primary risk factor.
- 90% of the parents attended 4 scholarship parent meetings.
- 100% of the participating parents strongly agreed the services provided were beneficial to them and their family.

The scholarship parent meetings were arranged to help to strengthen parent child relationships, introduce parents to various community resources, and to enlighten them in the need for making healthy choices pertaining to their child's care.

Childcare Resource and Referral

Program Description: Child Care Resource & Referral provided services in Aiken, Edgefield, and Saluda Counties. Services were coordinated to facilitate accessibility, affordability, and quality of child care for parents and their children; support and guidance to enhance child care providers' ability to achieve higher performance standards; and to partner with community agencies to advocate for improvements and support of early care and education.

Program results:

- 104 adults; 112 children 348 referrals
- 348 referrals were made to 22 families.
- 10 parent workshops/classes were held for 117 parents.
- 5 trainings were provided to 226 childcare providers.
- 13.25 technical assistance hours were provided to childcare staff.
- 2,062 books and resources were distributed in the community.

EARLY EDUCATION.

4 Year Old Kindergarten

Program description: Aiken County First Steps leveraged state, local and private resources to increase the quality of, and number of children participating in developmentally appropriate pre-kindergarten programs in both the public and private sectors. Particular emphasis was placed on fidelity to research-based instructional models and targeting of students at-risk of early school failure. Research continues to confirm that quality preschool programs make a difference. High-quality early learning experiences help children start school ready to succeed and are comprised of physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills. Children need a comprehensive approach including all four skill areas to ensure future success.

Program results:

- 59 children served at Greendale, Oakwood Windsor, and Ridge Spring Monetta Elementary Schools.
- 100 % of children enrolled in the 4-K program met the “at risk” criteria.
- All ACFS funded programs met South Carolina 4K requirements for curriculum, pupil-teacher ratios, materials and class size.
- 86% of parents participated in home visits; 89% of parents attended parent workshops.
- As a result of First Steps funding, an additional 4K class was made available.

SCHOOL TRANSITION.

Countdown to Kindergarten

Program description: Aiken County First Steps realizes the importance of school readiness for our youngest learners -- our new kindergartners -- and believe it is our job to help equip them and their parents with the best tools, tips and resources available as they prepare to enter school. Countdown to Kindergarten engaged families, educators and community members in an effort to celebrate and support the transition into kindergarten as a significant educational and developmental milestone for children and their families. This program instilled confidence in children entering kindergarten and the world of school, and also taught parents how to advocate for their children within the educational system.

Program results:

- 16 children served
- 53% received all 7 home visits.
- 64% of children served live in a single parent home.
- 86% of parents stated that as a result of CTK, they had more conversations with their child.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures By Funding Source</u>	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$479,667
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$34,379
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$413
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	\$325
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$17,395
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$31,984
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$53,370
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 11</i>)	\$920
TOTAL:	\$618,453

<u>Expenditures By Program / Strategy Name</u>	
Parents As Teachers (PAT)	\$23,040
Fatherhood Initiative	\$28,515
Full Day 4K	\$231,469
Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$43,189
Childcare Training	\$14,464
Childcare Scholarships	\$47,238
Childcare Resource and Referral	\$47,089
Healthcare	\$85,749
Countdown to Kindergarten	\$8,488
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$38,404
Administrative Functions	\$51,150
TOTAL:	\$618,795

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Aiken Newcomers Club	\$50
Alvin Corley	\$5
Betsy A. Anthony	\$10
Children's Trust Fund of SC	\$2,511
Deanna A. Risher	\$150
Denise M. Tarangelo	\$5
Dollar General Literacy Foundation	\$15,000
G.L. Byrd	\$15
George L. Webb	\$20

Glenda Scott	\$20
Greenville Technical College	\$100
Interfaith Community Services of SC	\$25,090
Jan W. Wilson	\$5
Jeanie Glover	\$5
Jennie Beck	\$30
Jill S. Brown	\$20
Joan W. Justice	\$10
Joann Rice	\$10
Judith A. Mitchell	\$10
Kathryn W. Austin	\$5
Lisa K. Garner	\$30
Myra L. Toomajian	\$60
Paula T. Simmons	\$10
Perijetta K. Hightower	\$150
Phillip A Hare	\$10
Ray Eckenrode	\$50
Rebecca M. Koelker	\$10
Rudnelle Pollock-Scott	\$5
Shirley von Beck	\$130
Southern Wesleyan University	\$100
Terry Miller	\$5
Vanetta H. Corley	\$10
William C. Price	\$100
William P. Mims	\$10
TOTAL: \$43,751	

Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 21.38%
(At least 15% Legislative requirement)

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

AIKEN COUNTY FIRST STEPS BOARD MEMBERSHIP

James Holt, Chair,	DSS
Jennie Beck	Library
Gwen Byrd	Pre-K/Primary Educator
Stephens Clark	Faith Community
Thomas Devine	Early Childhood Education
Jessica Ford	Healthcare Provider
Peggy Ford	Legislative Appointee

P.K. Hightower	Business Community
Geneva Jackson	Family Ed./Training/Support Provider
Angela Johnson	Parent of a First Steps Child
Rebecca Koelker	Legislative Appointee
Monika Oliver	DHEC
Teresa Patterson	Head Start
William Price	Pre-K/Primary Educator
DeAnna Risher	Legislative Appointee
Paula Simmons	Pre-K/Primary Educator
Taris Simmons	Transportation
Vernel Taylor	Parent of a First Steps Child
Keayla Terry	Non-Profit
Myra Toomajian	Early Childhood Education
Shirley von Beck	Early Childhood Education
David Walker	Faith Community
Charlotte Webb	Pre-K/Primary Educator
Cherell Williams	Family Ed./Training/Support Provider

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

**Thank You Aiken County
First Steps!**



**Ridge Spring-Monetta
Elementary School
Full Day 4K Class**

2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Aiken County

Total Children Under Six: 11,281

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

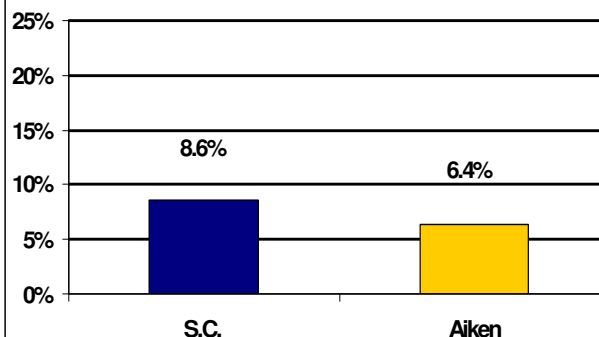
Aiken County (2007): 6.4%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 15 Aiken County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

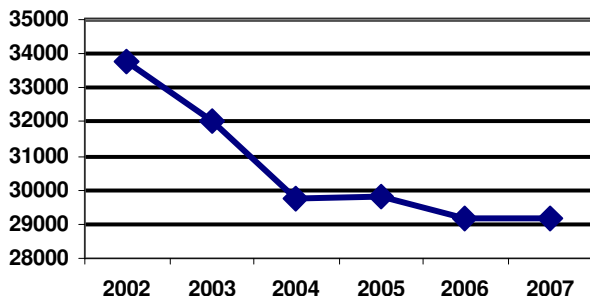
Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

723 of Aiken County's 11,281 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

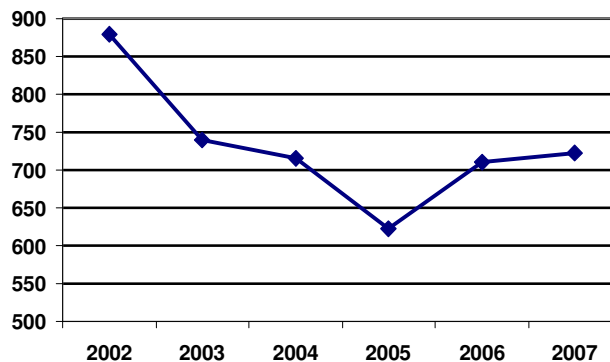
Children Under Age 6 Receiving TANF Benefits
(August 2007)



South Carolina Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



Aiken Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Aiken County

Total Children Under Six: 11,281

CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

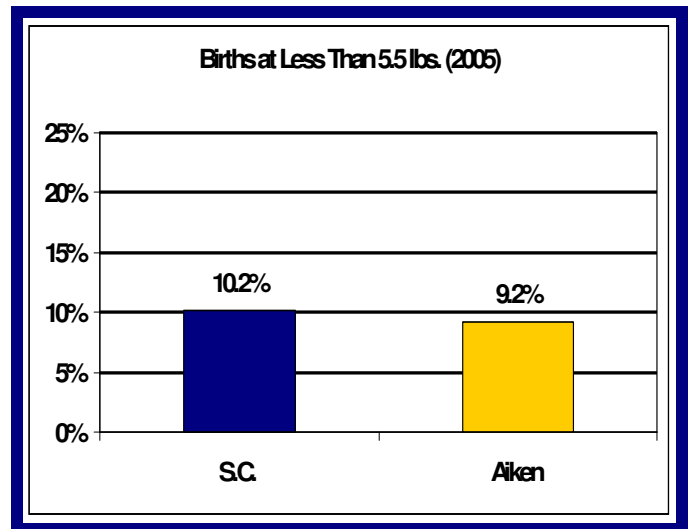
Aiken County (2005): 9.2%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 10 Aiken County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

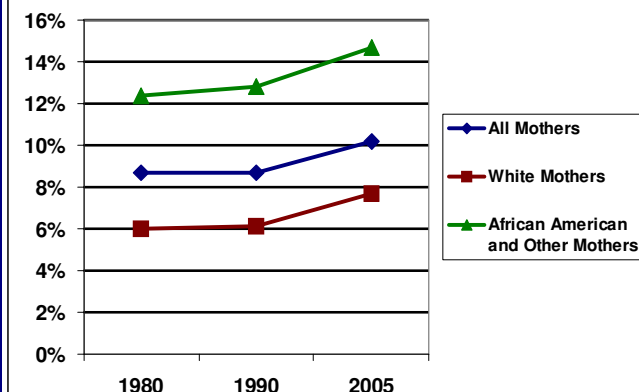
Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

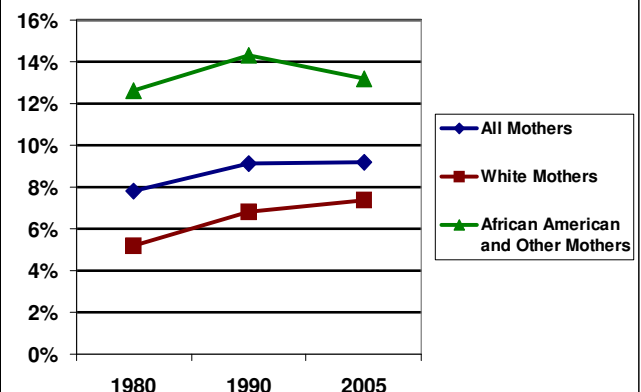
170 of the 1,847 children born in Aiken County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



South Carolina Births at Less than 5.5 lbs.



Aiken County Births at Less than 5.5 lbs.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Aiken County

Total Children Under Six: 11,281

BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

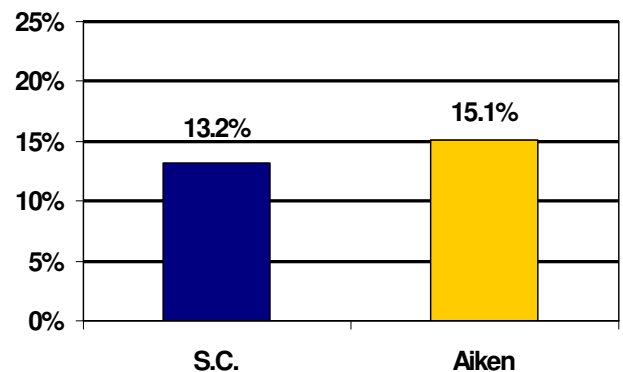
Aiken County (2005): 15.1%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 5 Aiken County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

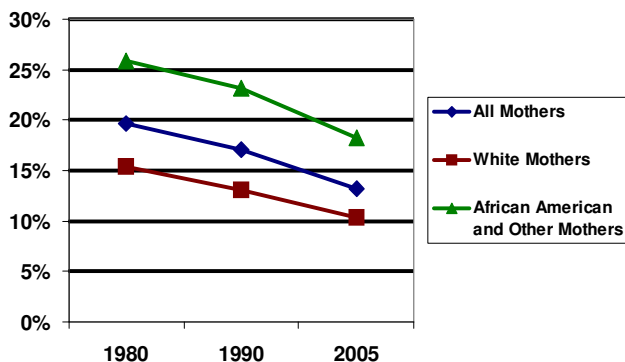
Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

279 of the 1,847 children born in Aiken County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

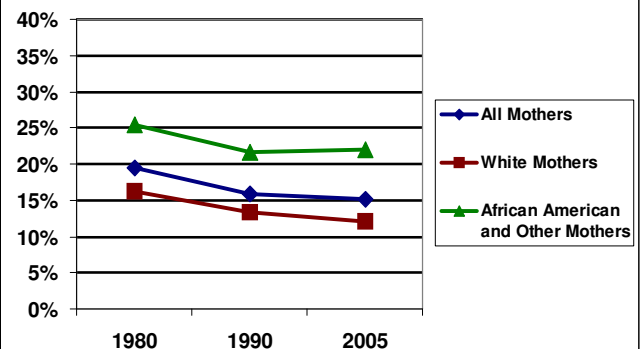
Births to Teenage Mothers (2005)



South Carolina Births to Teenage Mothers



Aiken County Births to Teenage Mothers



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Aiken County

Total Children Under Six: 11,281

BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

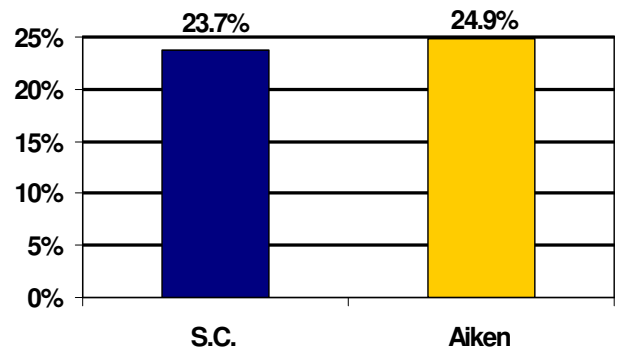
Aiken County (2005): 24.9%

Fast Fact: 1 in 4 children in Aiken County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

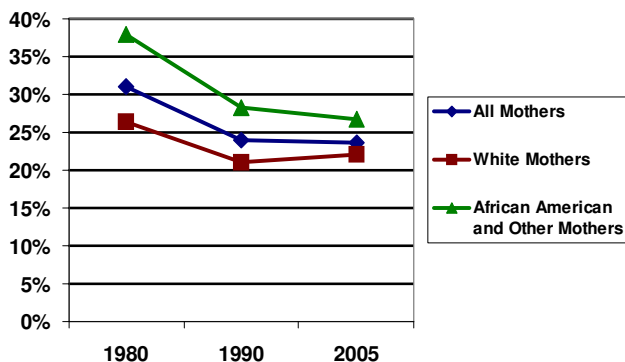
Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

459 of the 1,847 children born in Aiken County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

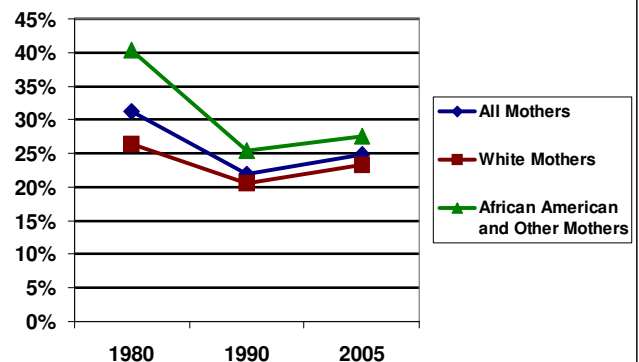
Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma (2005)



SC Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



Aiken County Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



**Thank You Aiken County
First Steps!**



**Ridge Spring-Monetta
Elementary School
Full Day 4K Class**